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THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

AND

Masolino, Masaccio, and Filippino Lippi.

BY

A. H. LAYARD, M.P.

HEADS OF MASOLINO, MASACCIO, AND FILIPPINO LIPPI.

ON the walls of a chapel to the right of the high altar in the Church of S. Maria del Carmine at Florence, is preserved a series of frescoes, which exceed in interest and importance all other works of the same class existing in this city, so rich in similar monuments of art. The chapel was built in the early part of the fifteenth century, by Felice Michele di Piuvichese Brancacci, a noble Florentine, who had distinguished himself in the service of the republic. Its decoration was not, however, completed until about eighty years later. The smoke of candles and of incense has combined, with the dust and decay of centuries, to darken the surface of the walls, and to dull the colours of the frescoes. It is only in the middle of a bright summer's day that some of the paintings can be seen in all their details. Those that surround the

solitary and half-closed window which lights the chapel are rarely, at any time, more than just visible through the gloom.

The importance of these frescoes arises from the fact that they hold the same place in the history of art during the fifteenth century, as the works of Giotto, in the Arena Chapel at Padua, hold during the fourteenth. Each series forms an epoch in painting from which may be dated one of those great and sudden onward steps, which have, in various ages and countries, marked the development of art. The history of Italian painting is divided into three distinct and well-defined periods by the Arena and Brancacci chapels, and the frescoes of Michelangelo and Raphael in the Vatican.

If, moreover, as Vasari states—and his statement can be tested and verified—all the great painters of the Tuscan and Umbrian schools of the end of the fifteenth and of the whole of the sixteenth century—including Fra Angelico, the two Lippis, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Pietro Perugino, Fra Bartolomeo, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto, studied the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, and to a certain extent formed their style upon them: the influence of those remarkable works reached far beyond the century in which they were painted. It may, indeed, be said that it has not even now passed away.

When we consider the condition of painting during the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century, the influence

exercised by these frescoes, and the admiration felt for them by the great masters, will cause us no surprise. The progress made by Giotto had been truly wonderful. However superior the works of Cimabue may have been to those of a race of ignorant painters, who, since the fall of the Roman Empire, were to be found in almost every city and town of Italy, covering the walls of churches and other sacred buildings with hideous effigies of virgins and saints, they are wanting in those qualities which mark a new birth in art. This artist, to whom Vasari, in his zeal for the reputation of the school of his native province, would attribute the revival of painting, was but the best of that long line of painters, who had followed each other in monotonous succession, and in whom rapidly faded away the influence of Roman art, leaving only a trace of its traditional forms in their grotesque conceptions. Not that such of the authentic works of Cimabue as have been preserved are deficient in a certain feeling for nature and a striving after grace in form and sentiment in expression. These qualities, which alone would distinguish him from the painters who preceded him, are to a certain extent visible in his celebrated altar-piece in the Rucellai Chapel of the Church of S. Maria Novella at Florence, the first exhibition of which, according to an apocryphal story related by Vasari, caused so great a manifestation of joy and surprise amongst the inhabitants of his native city. There is a peculiar sentiment and grace in the expression of the Virgin, and in the Angels supporting her throne, which it is very difficult to separate from the stiff and archaic character of the figures; and which, consequently, such copies of the picture that I have seen fail

to give. But when we compare the best of Cimabue's works with those of Giotto, it is impossible not to be struck by the immense distance which divides them—a distance little less than that which separates the rude and spiritless rhymes of the predecessors of Dante from the Divina Comedia. With Giotto we find ourselves in the presence of an almost new art. The bonds of tradition which had hitherto limited and deadened the human intellect, although not altogether thrown off, have been broken through; and genius has given to painting a new starting-point, from which the development of all its highest qualities can be traced.

The genius of Giotto had led him to feel and to strive after the loftiest and noblest ends of art: correct and natural delineation of form; the rendering of individual sentiment and feeling; the representation of an incident by the combined expression and action of those who are taking part in it; and the pleasing and harmonious arrangement of lines and masses called composition. He only failed to reach the height to which he aimed, because there was no school of painters, no accumulated experience, from which he could learn the best technical processes of his art, and could correct and develop his own ideas. The laws of light and shade, and of linear and aërial perspective, and the proper representation of form which can only be acquired by the application of rules founded upon long experience, had all to be worked out by him without any previous example to guide and teach him. Great, therefore, as was the advance made by Giotto in the art of painting, it is not surprising that he failed to

carry out his magnificent conceptions in a manner altogether worthy of them. His followers and imitators, who form the greater part of the Italian Schools of the fourteenth and of the first half of the fifteenth century—especially that of Tuscany—and whose names and performances have been so carefully chronicled by Vasari, were far behind their master in intellect and power, but they had the advantage of his teaching and experience. Their works have consequently a trace of Giotto's sentiment and vigour, but exaggerate his defects; whilst they show some little progress in mastery over the technical part of the art, in which Giotto was deficient.

It remained for one of the painters of the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, for Masaccio, to take up painting from the point at which Giotto had left it, and to carry it forward the next great step towards its maturest development. And this he accomplished, although his span of life was short, because he possessed, like Giotto, that rare genius which enabled him to shake off the trammels of convention, and to seek for truth in nature by ways of his own.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the human intellect was rapidly emancipating itself from those traditions of the dark ages which still weighed upon it. The arts followed letters in this great struggle. As the object of literature and science was to arrive at truth, so sculpture and painting strove in the same direction, by going back to nature, and seeking in her alone their models. Sculpture—as it has ever been the case—preceded painting in this onward movement. As

Niccola Pisano had gone before Giotto, so Ghiberti, in the gates of the Baptistery of Florence, first showed the way to that truthful imitation of nature, combined with the just application of the laws of art, which Masaccio was the first to carry out in painting. Rejecting the traditional forms which were still used by the followers of Giotto, he refused to accept conventional types for realities, and sought in nature herself for the principles of his art. He studied the laws of form and colour in all their details—laws which, for the most part, had been unknown to Giotto, or imperfectly understood by him; and laboured with singular success to carry them out in his works. And not only did Masaccio seek to imitate nature in her mere forms, but he also sought to represent the various aspects and subtle shades of human feeling and passion. He endeavoured to produce, as it were, actual deception upon the spectator. This he strove to accomplish by that proper and natural distribution of light and shade, which is technically called "modelling," and which can alone give the effect of roundness and relief to substances delineated on a flat surface; and by the most careful study and rendering of the proportions of the human frame and of all its subordinate details. At the same time he disposed his figures in groups, and gave to each one an appropriate expression, so that the subject of the picture, and his meaning, might be at once understood. He arranged his draperies in graceful, easy, and massive folds, which followed and showed the forms beneath; and he applied to his figures and backgrounds those laws of perspective which are absolutely necessary to give reality to a picture. He added to this strict imitation of nature, a feeling for rich and

harmonious colouring, and for graceful composition, and the power of selecting the most elevated and beautiful types appropriate to each class of subjects which he treated. Masaccio thus showed that he possessed the qualities which distinguish the great poet as well as the great painter ; qualities forming, when united with the most consummate mastery over the technical processes of the art—as in the frescoes of Michelangelo and Raphael in the Vatican—the highest perfection which painting has hitherto attained.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, although he had little admiration for the painters who preceded the golden period of Italian art, and rarely notices their works, was sensible of the greatness of Masaccio, and of his influence upon the development of painting. He says of him, in his Twelfth Discourse: "Raphael had completely studied his works; and indeed there was no other, if we except Michelangelo (whom he likewise imitated), so worthy of his attention ; and though his manner was dry and hard, his compositions formal and not enough diversified, according to the custom of painters in that early period, yet his works possess that grandeur and simplicity which accompany, and even sometimes proceed from, regularity and hardness of manner. We must consider the barbarous state of the arts before his time, when skill in drawing was so little understood, that the best of the painters could not even foreshorten the foot, but every figure appeared to stand upon his toes ; and what served for drapery had, from the hardness and smallness of the folds, too much the appearance of cords clinging round the body. He first introduced large drapery, flowing in an easy and natural

manner; indeed he appears to be the first who discovered the path that leads to every excellence to which the art afterwards arrived, and may, therefore, be justly considered as one of the great fathers of modern art."

It will be seen, however, that much of the praise of Reynolds belongs in right to Filippino Lippi, whose works were confounded, in the English critic's time, with those of Masaccio.

Masaccio was the painter of only part of the series of frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, although it is undoubtedly to his genius that they owe their renown. It is curious that, notwithstanding the celebrity which they had attained immediately after their execution, there is scarcely any question connected with art that has given rise to more controversy than the authorship of each separate fresco. Vasari attributes them to Masolino, Masaccio, and Filippino Lippi, and assigns to each painter his share in the work.* Modern critics have for the most part followed Vasari in ascribing the frescoes to those three painters, without, however, accepting his statements as to the authorship of each separate work; but have endeavoured, by a close examination of each fresco, to determine its author. The most recent writer on the

* Albertini, whose treatise on the principal Monuments of Art in Florence was published as early as the year 1510, says: "La capella de' Brancacci mezza di sua mano (di Masaccio) e l'altra di Masolino, excepto Sancto Pietro crucifixo, per mano di Philippo." We shall see that he was certainly in error as regards some of the frescoes which he assigns to Masaccio.

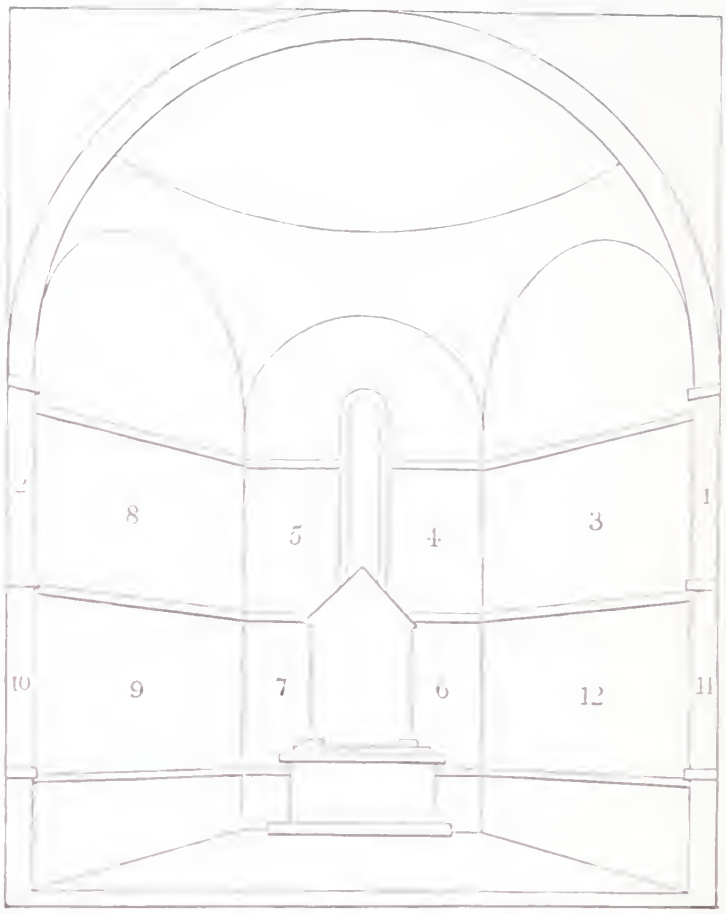
subject, Signor Cavalcaselle,* a critic of much acuteness and knowledge, and a patient investigator of the documentary evidence through which so much of modern art-criticism has been placed upon a solid foundation, maintains that only two of the painters mentioned by Vasari, Masaccio and Filippino Lippi, executed the frescoes now existing.

The accompanying plan will enable the reader to understand the form of the Brancacci Chapel and the position of the frescoes upon its walls. At its entrance are two pilasters supporting the arch which opens into the nave of the church. The walls end in lunettes, from which spring four spandrils and the vault. Twelve spaces (numbered from 1 to 12 in the plan), four of which are on the pilasters, are now occupied by frescoes. The paintings, which, according to Vasari, once occupied the lunettes and the vault, have either been destroyed, or are concealed beneath the modern decoration with which this part of the chapel has been covered.

The existing frescoes, with the exception of the first two, represent the principal events in the life of S. Peter, taken from the New Testament and from the legends, and are divided into the following subjects :†

* The principal modern authorities upon the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel are Kugler, in his "Handbook of Italian Painting" (edited by Sir Charles Eastlake); the author of the notes and appendices to the lives of Masolino, Masaccio, and Filippino Lippi, in Le Monnier's edition of Vasari; and Crowe and Cavalcaselle, who, in their admirable "History of Painting in Italy," have almost exhausted the subject.

† In numbering the frescoes, I have followed the order of the subjects All of them have been published by the Arundel Society.



PERSPECTIVE OF THE SACRISTY CHAPEL IN THE CARMINE AT FLORENCE*

1. Adam and Eve standing beneath the tree of knowledge, round which the serpent is entwined.

2. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

3. The Apostle Peter raising Tabitha, and the Apostles Peter and John healing the cripple at the gate of the Temple.

4. S. Peter baptising.

5. S. Peter preaching.

6. S. Peter distributing alms.

* Taken from Crowe and Cavalcaselle's "History of Painting in Italy."

7. S. Peter and S. John curing the infirm and the sick.

8. Christ directing S. Peter to take the tribute money from the mouth of a fish, and the payment of the tribute money.

9. S. Peter restoring the King's son to life, and the Apostle enthroned.

10. S. Paul addressing S. Peter in prison.

11. The Angel delivering S. Peter from prison.

12. S. Peter and S. Paul before the Proconsul, and the Martyrdom of S. Peter.

Before proceeding to describe these frescoes, I will give a sketch of the lives of the three painters to whom they are ascribed, and an account of their principal works.

According to Vasari, Masolino was born in 1403, in the town of Panicale of Valdelsa, in the Florentine territory. He is, therefore, commonly known as Masolino da Panicale, to distinguish him from an eminent painter of the same name, who, at a later period, flourished at Ferrara. As a youth, he studied under Ghiberti; and having been employed by that great sculptor on the celebrated bronze gates of the Baptistery at Florence, he became an excellent worker in metal. He did not, however, follow the profession of a sculptor, but left his master at an early age. When nineteen years old he gave himself to the study of painting under Starnina, an artist of some reputation and a fair colourist. After making some progress under this painter, he went to Rome in order to perfect himself in his art, but finding the air of that city injurious to his health, he returned to Florence. Soon afterwards he

gained so much fame by a fresco representing S. Peter, which he executed in the Church of the Carmine, that he was chosen to decorate the Chapel recently erected there by a member of the Brancacci family. The untiring energy and earnestness with which he devoted himself to this undertaking, brought on a fatal illness, and he died in the year 1440, at the age of thirty-seven, before completing the work which he had commenced. The only frescoes which he had executed were the figures of the four Evangelists on the vault; and, on the walls, Christ calling Andrew and Peter from their nets; the repentance of Peter after he had betrayed his Master; the Apostle preaching to the Gentiles; his shipwreck; S. Peter healing his daughter Petronilla (more correctly described as the raising of Tabitha); and the Apostle and S. John curing the lame man at the gate of the Temple.

Of the frescoes thus assigned by Vasari to Masolino, only two now remain, S. Peter healing Petronilla (or the raising of Tabitha) and the Apostle preaching. The biographer mentions no other works by this painter except a fresco in the casa Orsini at Rome, which has perished. His life of Masolino is singularly meagre and unsatisfactory, considering the important position which he assigns to him in the history of art. After the death of Masolino, his pupil Masaccio was, according to Vasari, appointed to complete the decoration of the Brancacci Chapel.

As Vasari must have been acquainted with contemporaries of Filippino Lippi, one of the painters who was employed

in executing the frescoes existing in the chapel, it might be fairly presumed that he had good authority for ascribing a part of them to Masolino. Even tradition, when attaching to works so important and well-known, might, in Vasari's day, have been accepted as almost sufficient evidence of the fact; and Albertini, whose treatise I have already quoted, and who only wrote five years after the death of Filippino Lippi, confirms his statement as to Masolino's share in the work. But it has been called in question by Signor Cavalcaselle on two distinct grounds : first, on account of proof, obtained from the most authentic sources, that nearly all the dates which Vasari has given in connection with Masolino's career are incorrect; and secondly, on the evidence furnished by a critical examination of the works themselves, and by a comparison between them and others undoubtedly executed by Masolino, recently discovered, and apparently unknown to Vasari.

It would appear from documents chiefly existing in the Florentine archives, that Masolino was the son of one Cristoforo Fini, and that he was born at Florence, and not at Panicale, in the year 1383, twenty years earlier than the time assigned for his birth by Vasari. His name was Tommaso, of which Masolino is the diminutive. There is no proof whatever that he worked under Ghiberti, and Vasari appears to have confounded him with another Tommaso, or Maso, the son of one Cristoforo Braccii, a goldsmith and worker in metals, who was employed on the gates of the Baptistery. It is probable that he studied painting under Starnina, as his biographer has stated. In the year 1423 he was admitted

into the guild of the doctors and apothecaries (medici e spezali) of Florence, a guild which seems to have received many painters. Not long afterwards he accompanied to Hungary the celebrated Filippo Scolari, better known as Pippo Spano, the Obergespann of Temeswar. He must have returned to Italy after a residence of three or four years abroad, for we find him in 1428, according to an inscription still extant, painting frescoes in a church and baptistery for Cardinal Branda di Castiglione, in the pleasant town of Castiglione d' Olona, in the beautiful Lombard plains to the north of Milan. No further traces have as yet been found of this painter; and with the exception of the statement of Vasari, we have no account of the time and manner of his death.

Masaccio probably died, as it will be seen in the sequel, in 1429. Consequently, if Vasari's statement be true, that this painter continued the work that Masolino had commenced in the Brancacci Chapel, either Masolino must have executed the frescos there previously to those at Castiglione d' Olona, or between his visit to that place and the death of Masaccio. A comparison of the frescoes at Castiglione d' Olona with those in the Carmine proves, in Signor Cavalcaselle's opinion, that the first supposition is untenable; as the latter works show a far greater acquaintance with the true principles of painting, and a more matured judgment and skill, than the former. It would be against all experience, he contends, to suppose that Masolino could have had less knowledge of his art in the later than in the earlier part of his career. On the other hand, it seems equally improbable that he should have painted

the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel attributed to him by Vasari within the few months which elapsed between the completion of his work at Castiglione d' Olona in 1428 and Masaccio's death in 1429. So that Signor Cavalcaselle comes to the conclusion, after a careful examination of dates and a critical comparison of the frescoes in the two places, either that there are no paintings by Masolino now existing in the Brancacci Chapel; or that, instead of Masaccio carrying on the work commenced by Masolino, the reverse was the case, and that it was the latter who was employed to finish the frescoes begun by Masaccio. The last supposition he rejects on critical grounds, and suggests that if the Brancacci Chapel did ever contain works by Masolino they must have been upon the vault and in the lunettes, and that they have been destroyed, or are concealed beneath the comparatively modern decoration with which the upper part of the chapel is now covered.*

It is evident that no reliance can be placed upon Vasari's account of Masolino, especially as regards the dates. Assuming that the records which I have quoted do not refer to another painter of the same name, Masolino could not have died at the age of thirty-seven in 1440, leaving Masaccio to continue the decoration of the Brancacci Chapel. There can be no doubt as to the authorship and date of the frescoes at Castiglione d' Olona. The inscription upon a bas-relief over the principal entrance to the church, representing the Virgin

* The arguments on the subject of the authorship of the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel are very fully stated in Crowe and Cavalcaselle's History of Painting in Italy, vol. i., chap. xxiv.

holding the infant Christ, who is blessing Cardinal Branda, records the erection of the building by that dignitary in 1428. This date is repeated in the interior, where a contemporary inscription states that Masolino painted the frescoes—"MASOLINUS DE FLORENTIA PINXIT."

In this confusion of dates, arising out of Vasari's mistakes, it is necessary, in order to form an opinion as to the authorship of the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel attributed to Masolino, to compare them carefully with his undoubted works at Castiglione d' Olona. At the same time, as nothing now remains of the paintings which, according to his biographer, he executed in the lunettes and on the vault, we have no means of testing Vasari's statement with regard to them.

It appears to me that the only fresco now existing in the Brancacci Chapel which has any claim to be considered as a work of Masolino, is the "Raising of Tabitha" (No 3). I agree with Signor Cavalcaselle in attributing to Masaccio the other fresco, the "Preaching of S. Peter" (No. 5), assigned by Vasari to Masolino. In style and pictorial treatment, in composition, in the costumes of the figures, and in the architecture, the "Raising of Tabitha" seems to me to approach much nearer to the frescoes of Castiglione d' Olona than to those undoubtedly by Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel. That there should be a certain resemblance between the works of the two painters need cause us no surprise, as it is most probable that Vasari was right in saying that Masaccio was the pupil of Masolino. But there appears

THE BAPTISTERY AT CASTIGLIONE D' OLONA

FROM A DRAWING BY MRS. HEATON BUER

to me to be so marked a difference between this fresco and the rest of the series in the Brancacci Chapel—it shows so evident an inferiority in composition, that I can scarcely bring myself to believe that they are by the same hand. It resembles the frescoes of Castiglione d' Olona in the introduction of fanciful costumes and head-dresses; and the action and expression of the figures are weak and commonplace, when compared with the works of Masaccio.* The difficulty of reconciling dates is no doubt considerable, and the question must perhaps be considered as undecided, until further records of an authentic character, illustrating the lives of the two painters, are discovered.

The frescoes of Masolino at Castiglione d' Olona were executed on the walls of two separate buildings, a church and an adjoining baptistery. On the vaulted ceiling and walls of the octangular choir of the church he painted scenes from the lives of the Virgin, S. Stephen, and S. Lawrence, and in one of the compartments he introduced the portrait of Cardinal Branda Castiglione, at whose expense the building was erected and decorated. The frescoes have suffered much from time and wanton injury. Towards the end of the last century they

* The description which Signor Cavalcaselle gives of Masolino's style and his defects, would appear to be especially applicable to the fresco of "The Raising of Tabitha." "He neglected the great maxims of composition—the general mass is forgotten for the sake of the detail—solitary figures are unduly prominent —wanting form, and absence of mass in light and shadow. He was careless of the traditional garb of time-honoured scriptural figures, and his personages were dressed in vast caps and turbans and tight-fitting clothes." History of Italian Painting, vol. i., p. 508, &c. These criticisms apply to the "Raising of Tabitha," but to no other fresco in the Brancacci Chapel.

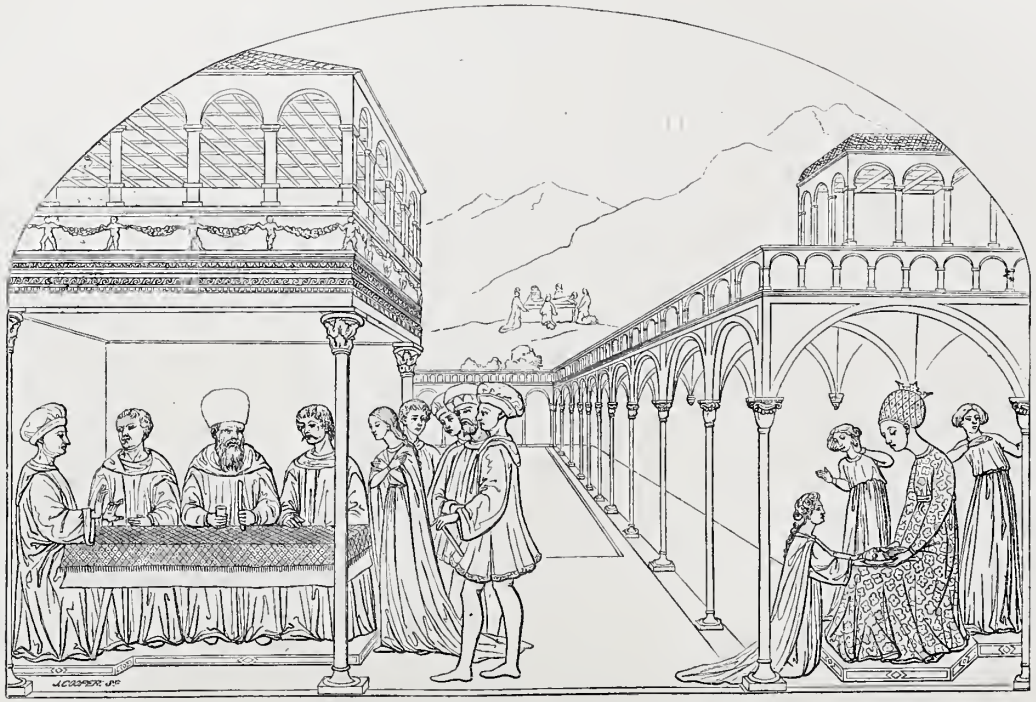
were covered with whitewash by the rector. In the year 1843 the whitewash was removed, but not without great damage to the paintings

These frescoes are distinguished by considerable merit. The figures are not deficient in grace, and are well conceived; the colour is subdued and harmonious. At the same time there is a dryness of manner and a conventional treatment of the subjects, which show that Masolino was still under the influence of the school of Giotto.

The inscription containing the name of the painter is written on a "cartellino" in an angle of the wall to the right of the high altar

On the walls of the Baptistery, Masolino represented the history of S. John, and on the vaulted ceiling, Christ surrounded by Angels, the four Evangelists, and various Saints. The principal subjects are "S. John Preaching," the "Baptism of the Saviour," the "Daughter of Herodias before Herod,"* and the "Execution of the Baptist." In the fresco of "S. John Baptising," the figures of the men preparing for the rite are drawn with much spirit, and show a careful study of the nude. In treatment they are not unlike those of "S. Peter Baptising," by Masaccio, in the Brancacci Chapel. On the keystone of

* The woodcut of this fresco is from a drawing by Signor Cavalcaselle, and has been kindly lent to me by Mr. Murray, to which I am indebted for the woodcuts of Masaccio's fresco in S. Clemente at Rome, and of "S. Paul addressing S. Peter," by Lippi.



THE DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS BEFORE HEROD.

A PAINTING BY MASOLINO IN THE BAPTISTERY OF CASTIGLIONE D' OLONA

an arch is painted a date, 1435, which Signor Cavalcaselle believes to have been added long after the execution of the frescoes.*

No works by Masolino, except those which I have mentioned, are known to have been preserved, and there is no example of an easel picture or altar-piece by him.

Of the many illustrious painters who flourished in the fifteenth century, including Paolo Ucello, Fra Filippo Lippi, Ghirlandaio, and Sandro Botticelli, Masaccio was undoubtedly the one whose genius has had the greatest influence on the progress of painting, and who approaches the nearest to that high standard of perfection which was achieved by the great masters of the sixteenth century. And this is the more extraordinary when we consider the early age at which he died, and the small number of works which he appears to have left behind him. Vasari—no mean judge and critic of painting, and intimately acquainted with the practice of the art—says of him: "We are most especially indebted to Masaccio for that which regards the good method of painting; since it was he who, desirous of acquiring fame, first felt that painting was a close imitation, by outline and colour, of the various objects that nature herself has produced, and that he who best succeeds in accomplishing this, may be considered as having attained to the highest excellency in his art. Convinced of

* The editors of Le Monnier's edition of Vasari's "Lives" (Florence, 1848), believe this date to be contemporary with the frescoes. They would place the death of Masolino in 1440.

this truth, Masaccio, by constant study, so taught himself, that he may be classed amongst the first who freed painting almost completely from the dryness and imperfections by which it was characterised before his time. He was the first who introduced into painting beautiful action and movement, loftiness of character and life, and that appropriate and natural relief in his figures, which no painter before his time had succeeded in giving." Vasari adds, that "Masaccio's paintings will bear comparison with any modern work for correct drawing and for colour."

According to his biographer, Masaccio was born in the castellated town of S. Giovanni, in one of the most delightful parts of the valley of the Arno. His name was Tommaso, but he was familiarly called Masaccio, a reproachful corruption of it, meaning "slovenly, or dirty, Tom," on account of his negligent habits and dress. He was of a kindly and honest disposition, and ready to help others although careless of his own interests. He commenced the practice of his art when very young, and whilst Masolino was painting his frescos in the Brancacci chapel. The works of Fra Filippo Lippi and Donatello were the chief objects of his study. His attention was principally directed to the laws of perspective, and Vasari especially mentions a picture by him, preserved in the house of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, the painter, representing Christ casting out devils, in which the outside and inside of several houses were represented with extraordinary skill. He also diligently employed himself in drawing from the nude, and in executing difficult foreshortenings.

After painting various altar-pieces and frescoes in Florence and the neighbourhood, he went to Rome in order to improve himself still more in his art. There he attained great fame by decorating with frescoes the Chapel of the Cardinal of S. Clemente, in the church dedicated to that saint. He painted besides several altar-pieces in tempera, on one of which Michelangelo one day bestowed high praise, in Vasari's presence. On the recall from exile of Cosimo de' Medici, who had always befriended and aided him, Masaccio returned to Florence. During his absence, Masolino had died, leaving unfinished the great work which he had commenced in the Brancacci chapel. Masaccio received a commission to complete it; but before undertaking a labour of so much importance, he desired to give some proof of the progress which he had made in his art. He accordingly painted in fresco a figure of S. Paul, in the Church of the Carmine, extolled by Vasari as a work of extraordinary power, in which the painter succeeded in conveying, in a most wonderful manner, the character of the Apostle by the expression of his countenance.* Whilst he was thus occupied the church was consecrated. In order to preserve a record of the ceremony, Masaccio represented it in a fresco over a doorway which led into the convent from the cloisters. It was painted in chiaroscuro, or *terra verde*, and he introduced into it, with consummate skill, a procession of Florentine citizens, including many of the most distinguished men of the time, and amongst them Masolino,

* This fresco, together with the figure of S. Peter, by Masolino, in the same church, was destroyed in 1675, when a chapel was built by one Andrea Corsini.

who had been his master. After finishing this work he painted various frescoes in the Brancacci chapel, which Vasari particularly describes. But before he could complete the task confided to him, he died, at the early age of twenty-six—so suddenly as to give rise to a suspicion that his death had been caused by poison. He was buried in the year 1443, in the Church of the Carmine, but no monument records the spot where he was interred.

Such is the history of this great painter, as given by Vasari. It abounds with mistakes, and errors of date. As in the case of Masolino, contemporary documents of undoubted authenticity furnish more trustworthy materials for the life of Masaccio than the mere traditions which appear to have been used by his biographer. He was born in 1402, fifteen years before the time assigned by Vasari, and was the son of a notary, named Ser Giovanni di Simone Guidi, of the family of Scheggia. The place of his birth appears to have been, as Vasari states, Castel S. Giovanni, in the Val d' Arno. Already at the age of nineteen (in 1421) he was enrolled in the guild of the apothecaries at Florence; two years before Masolino was admitted into the same corporation. In the year 1424 he was registered as a member of the guild of painters, as "Maso di Ser Giovanni di Chastello Sangiovanni."*

The next authentic mention of Masaccio has been found in the registers of the property and incomes of the citizens of

* The registers quoted in the text are still preserved in the Florentine archives.

Florence, made in pursuance to a decree of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, in the year 1427. The return given by Masaccio and his brother Giovanni, declares that they lived in Florence with their mother, and that Masaccio was twenty-five years of age. They resided in a house belonging to one Andrea Macigni, for which they paid an annual rent of 10 florins. Masaccio earned 6 soldi a day, and occupied part of a shop belonging to the Badia of Florence, at the yearly rent of 2 florins. He declares himself debtor to Nicolo di Ser Lapo, painter, in 102 lire and 4 soldi. The family owe Pietro Battiloro about 6 florins, and to the pawnbrokers, at the signs of "The Lion," and "The Cow," for articles pawned at various times, 4 florins. There was, moreover, owing to his assistant, Andrea di Giusto, for arrears of salary, 6 florins.*

* This return of Masaccio's property, first published by Gaye, in his "Carteggio," vol. i., p. 115, is very curious. It is in the following words:—

"Dinanzi a voi Signori uficiali del chatasto di firenze, e chontado e distretto, qui faccio tutti nostri beni e sustanze, mobili e immobili, di noi tommaso e giovanni di S. Giovanni da Castel Sangiovanni, valdarno di sopra, abitanti in firenze. Abbiamo dextimo soldi sei.

"Siamo in famiglia noi due chonnostra madre, la quale è d' età danni quaranta cinque; io tomaso sono detà danni venticinque e giovanni mio fratello sopradetto è detà danni venti.

"Siamo in una chasa dandrea macigni, della quale paghiamo lanno di pigione fiorini 10, che da 1° via, da 2° il detto andrea, da 3° larcivescovo di firenze, da 4° il detto andrea.

"Tengo io tomaso parte duna bottega della badia di firenze, della quale pago lanno lanno (*sic*) fiorini 2, che di 1° via, da 2° e 3° da 4° la detta badia. Sono debitore di nicholo di s. lapo dipintore di lire 102 s. 4.

"Siamo debitori di piero battiloro di fior 6, o circa. Siamo debitori al presto di lioni e quello della vacha per pegni nabbiamo posti in più volte, di fior 4.

"Siamo debitori dandre di giusto, il quale stette chomeco tomaso sopradetto, di suo salario fior 6.

In the return of Nicolo di Ser Lapo for the same year, the debt owing to him is stated to be 200 lire, or nearly double the amount mentioned by Masaccio; and in that for the year 1430, he declares that the heirs of Tommaso di Ser Giovanni the painter, still owe him 68 lire. "This Tommaso," he adds, "died at Rome, and I know not whether I shall ever get any part of my money, as his brother says that he is not his heir."* Masaccio's income return for the same year still exists, but only in part filled up, and with these words written in a strange hand upon it: "dicesi é morto in Roma" —"He is said to have died in Rome." He would then have been about twenty-eight years old, and the statement of Vasari as to his death at the age of twenty-seven, would be confirmed, but not the biographer's account of the locality at which it took place, and the circumstances attending it. No other documentary evidence has been discovered relating to Masaccio.

Of the various works which, according to Vasari, Masaccio executed at Florence before his first visit to Rome, none remain

"Nostra madre di avere fior 100 per la sua dota, quaranta da mona d' andreuccio di chastel sangiovanni, e sessanta dalle rede di tedeschi di chastel sangiovanni, il quale fu suo secondo marito. Nostra madre sopraletto di avere dalle rede del sopraletto tedesco il fruto duna vigna, posta nella piscina nella corte di chastel sangiovanni, per un lascio fatto dal sopraletto tedesco, nonne schriviamo la rendita dela vigna, nè chenfini, perchè negli sappiamo, nè nona nostra madre alchuna rendita della detta vigna nè abita nella detta chasa."

* "Rede di Tommaso di Ser Giovanni dipintore den dare lire sessanta otto. Questo Tommaso morì a Roma, non so se mai n' aro alcuna cosa, poichè dice il fratello non essere rede."

except the fresco in the Church of S. Maria Novella. It is highly praised by his biographer, especially that part of it which represents a vaulted ceiling in perspective; but curiously enough it remained concealed for two centuries by a vast altar-piece, of no great merit, painted by Vasari himself. When the Church of S. Maria Novella was restored a few years ago, Masaccio's fresco was uncovered, and having been detached from the wall was removed to another part of the building. Unfortunately it was exposed at the same time to the destructive process of restoration, and it has consequently suffered so much, that little remains to show its original character. It represents the Trinity between the Virgin and S. John the Evangelist, with two kneeling figures, probably portraits of the persons, man and wife, for whom the fresco was executed. From the vigour of the treatment, as compared with the frescoes in S. Clemente at Rome, Signor Cavalcaselle believes it to be of a later period than that assigned to it by Vasari, who places it amongst the painter's earliest works. It is remarkable for a careful study of anatomy ; the expression of the various heads is dignified and life-like, and the whole is executed with a power and a mastery over the materials employed, which are characteristic rather of a mature painter of the sixteenth century, than of one who had commenced his career at the beginning of the fifteenth. At the same time, in composition and style this fresco is inferior to those in the Brancacci Chapel.

Amongst the earliest known works by Masaccio, are the

frescoes in the Church of S. Clemente at Rome.* Except from Vasari's statement, we have no knowledge of the time at which they were painted, but they bear signs of having been executed at the commencement of the painter's career, probably in the year 1423 or 1424, when Masaccio was about twenty-one years of age.† They cover the vault, an arch, and the walls of a chapel. Those on the vault and arch represent the Evangelists, various saints, the Twelve Apostles, and the doctors of the church. Those on the walls, the Crucifixion and scenes from the histories of S. Catherine, S. Clemente, and of some other saint who has not been satisfactorily identified. In the Crucifixion, Masaccio has followed, in the general composition and disposition of the principal figures, the traditional arrangement of Giotto and his followers. In the centre, beneath the Saviour crucified between the two thieves, is the usual group of the fainting Virgin supported by the three Maries and S. John the Evangelist; Roman soldiers, some on horseback, and various spectators, are assembled round the cross. In knowledge of anatomy and in technical execution, this fresco shows

* It is to be observed that the editors of the last edition of Vasari's Lives, maintain that the frescoes in the Chapel of S. Clemente are not by Masaccio, but by some earlier master of the school of Giotto. (Le Monnier's ed. Life of Masaccio.)

† Signor Cavalcaselle (History of Italian Painting, vol. i., p. 525) suggests that the frescoes were painted previous to 1424, but they could scarcely have been executed by Masaccio at the age of seventeen. He assigns this early date to them in order to explain Vasari's statement that Masaccio returned to Florence from Rome upon the recall of Cosimo de' Medici, which took place in 1434, some years after the painter's death: an event which, he suggests, the biographer may have confounded with the return to power of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, in 1420.

considerable advance upon the works of the painters of the previous century, and the head of the dying Christ is singularly fine. But it is in the frescoes representing the life and martyrdom of S. Catherine, that Masaccio has given evidence of his power as an original painter. The finest and best known of these compositions is the one which represents the Saint disputing with the doctors before Maxentius. The

S. CATHERINE DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS.
A FRESCO BY MASACCIO, IN S. CLEMENTE AT ROME.

Emperor is on his throne at the end of a room, on either side of which are seated four doctors. They are earnestly listening to S. Catherine, and their action and expression are admirable for variety and truth to nature. The figure of the youthful Saint is full of grace and innocence. She stands calmly in the midst of the doctors enforcing her argument by a gesture

of her two hands, still natural to Italian disputants. The composition is very simple, and vividly recalls the works of Fra Angelico.

Of the other frescoes, the most interesting are S. Catherine refusing to worship the idols, the Saint converting the Queen from the window of her cell, the executioners endeavouring in vain to break her upon the wheel, and her final martyrdom, and that of the Queen, by decapitation. They are each distinguished by the same simple and pleasing composition, by natural and graceful action and expression, and by that knowledge of form which the painter subsequently displayed so remarkably in the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel. Unfortunately they have suffered so much from decay and unskilful restoration, that but little of Masaccio's original work remains. The other frescoes are of less interest, and are in a worse condition than those representing the history of S. Catherine.*

The resemblance in style between the frescoes of the chapel of S. Clemente and those of Masolino at Castiglione d' Olona confirms the statement of Vasari, that Masaccio had studied and formed himself upon the works of that painter.

After painting these frescoes, Masaccio probably returned to Florence and obtained the commission to decorate the walls of the Brancacci Chapel, but first executed fresco representing

* Engravings of the frescoes and of tracings from the principal heads, were published in Rome, in 1830, by Giovanni dall' Arni.

the consecration of the church. It still existed in the lifetime of Vasari, who praises the singular skill with which the painter had arranged and grouped the figures in procession, and the truthfulness of their expressions, but shortly afterwards entirely disappeared. According to the author of an old work on the principal monuments of Florence,* it had not been destroyed, but had been concealed by a wall which had been built up in the cloister when some alterations were made in the church, in the early part of the seventeenth century. Mr. Kirkup, so well known in connection with the interesting discovery of Giotto's portrait of Dante, in the Bargello at Florence, and for his intimate acquaintance with the history and ancient monuments of the city, was convinced that if the wall were taken down the fresco would be found preserved behind it; and he endeavoured to persuade the authorities of the church to try the experiment. However, only a part of the whitewash in the cloister was removed, but a fresco was discovered beneath it; not the one representing the consecration of the church painted in chiaroscuro, as described by Vasari, but apparently a fresco by Masaccio, and not unworthy of him. It has, fortunately, escaped the brush of the restorers, and some judgment can, therefore, be formed as to its merits. It is in colour; and in the part uncovered are groups of friars, with buildings, and a landscape in the background. Masaccio's great fresco may still remain, and it is to be regretted that after the discovery of this fragment no further attempt has been made to recover it.

* Bocchi. Bellezze di Firenze, ed. 1671, p. 337.

Of the various paintings in public galleries and private collections attributed to Masaccio, none appear to have any well-founded claim to authenticity except an altar-piece, called "The Conception," described by Vasari as having been originally painted for the Church of S. Ambrogio, at Florence, and now in the gallery of the Academy of Arts in that city. This picture is believed to be a genuine though youthful work of the painter. It has been much injured by restoration, and has been further damaged by the use of bad varnish; but it recalls the manner and method of Masaccio, especially in the proportions and outlines of the figures, and in the peculiar mode of using high-lights in order to give relief and roundness of form. The fine head of a youth, in a red cap and dark brown dress, in the National Gallery, assigned to him, and sometimes called his own portrait, is probably a work by Filippino Lippi. It is remarkable, considering the reputation which he had acquired, that so much mystery should hang over Masaccio's death. The tradition recorded by Vasari, that he had died of poison, was probably without foundation; but it is evident from the documents which I have quoted that he had left Florence in a secret and mysterious way. It is probable that the unfortunate painter, overwhelmed with debt and hard pressed by relentless creditors, had fled to Rome, leaving unfinished the great work which he had undertaken in the Brancacci Chapel; thus furnishing another example of the unhappy end to the career of men of genius of the same stamp.

Many years elapsed before a painter was found to complete

Masaccio's work. At length, towards the end of the century, between the years 1482 and 1490, Filippino Lippi, who had acquired great fame as a master, was commissioned to finish the series of frescoes which Masolino had commenced more than half a century before.

Vasari, in writing the life of Filippino Lippi, accepted, as was too much his habit, all the traditional gossip which was current in his day, and treated it as authentic history. Consequently his account of this painter is full of errors, and wrong dates. Filippino, he states, was the natural son of Fra Filippo Lippi, the celebrated painter and Carmelite friar, by a novice named Lucrezia Buti, whom he had seduced, and who had eloped with him from her convent. The story of Fra Filippo, as related by Vasari, is apparently a pure romance. The friar, he tells us, was captured by Barbary pirates, and carried into slavery, but was released from his chains as a reward for drawing his master's portrait in charcoal. On his return to his native country he ran away with Lucrezia, and was expelled the Carmelite order. He refused to avail himself of a dispensation offered to him by Pope Eugenius IV., which would have enabled him to marry the nun, and continued to live an immoral and disorderly life until his death. This romantic story, like many others related by Vasari, has been disproved by documentary evidence. Fra Filippo appears to have remained until the close of his life a poor friar. A letter is preserved in which he begs Piero de' Medici to give him some corn and oil in part payment of a picture which he had painted, in order that six marriageable

nieces, who were entirely dependent upon him, might not starve. At the age of forty he was chaplain to the convent of nuns of S. Giovanni, in Florence, and five years later he was rector of the Church of S. Quirico, at Legnaia. It is not likely that the seducer of a nun, and one who continued to lead the dissolute life attributed to him by his biographer, would have held these offices in the church. Filippino Lippi was probably the relative and scholar, and not the natural son, of Fra Filippo, and, in accordance with a custom prevalent at that time amongst artists, had been adopted by the friar. Filippino appears to have been born at Prato, a town of some importance near Florence; but the precise period of his birth has not been ascertained: it may have been about the year 1460. He was taught painting as a boy by Fra Filippo, who, however, died when Filippino was still a youth. He probably finished his studies under Fra Diamante, a painter of no great eminence, and a friar of the Carmelite convent, to whose care Fra Filippo had left him. According to Vasari, however, Sandro Botticelli was his master, and there is, indeed, much in his style and mode of colouring to remind one of that great painter, so much so that their works are frequently confounded. But as they were nearly of the same age it is more likely that they were fellow-students, and that they both acquired the same manner in the studio of Fra Filippo.

One of the earliest works of Filippino was an altar-piece on panel, representing the Vision of S. Bernard, painted for the Chapel of Francesco del Pugliese, at Campara, outside one

of the gates of Florence, and now placed in the church of the Badia, within the walls of that city. It was finished in 1480, when Filippino had only reached his twentieth year, and is still in admirable preservation.* Although in this picture he does not display the breadth of treatment and large style of Masaccio, but shows in its details and composition that he was still under the influence of the hard, conventional manner of the *quattrocentisti*, and to a certain extent of his first teacher; yet he had already carried the technical part of the art far beyond them, and had attained a richness and harmony of colour never reached by Fra Filippo Lippi. The Virgin suddenly presenting herself before the musing Saint, and turning over the leaves of his book, is a figure of singular dignity, grace, and beauty. The angels who attend her and nestle round her, are amongst the most charming creations of the playful fancy of the painter. The action and expression of the Saint, who starts from his reverie and contemplates the vision with astonishment, are very truthfully represented. The portrait of the donor, who kneels in the corner, is vigorously painted and life-like, but is awkwardly introduced, and interferes with the symmetry of the composition. The background with groups of friars, rocks, trees, and buildings, forms one of those conventional landscapes adopted by most painters of the time in their easel pictures. It, however, shows a feeling for nature, and an attempt to reproduce her forms, which has earned the praise of Vasari. The colour, which is

* A copy of this beautiful work has recently been made for the Arundel Society by Signor Mariannecci. It will be included in the "second" annual publications of the Society for the present year (1868).

of tempera of the finest description, is singularly rich and pleasing. The figure of S. Bernard is defective in drawing, especially in the unnatural length of the body—a fault not apparent in the other figures.

This picture may be compared with the representation of the same subject by Filippino's adopted father, Fra Filippo Lippi, now in the National Gallery—the graceful imagination and playful fancy of the scholar with the severe and simple treatment of the master. The contrast between the two works shows the direction in which painting was rapidly advancing towards the end of the fifteenth century, and how the way was being prepared for the great school which was founded by Raphael and Michelangelo.

In the "Vision of S. Bernard" and in other pictures painted in his early youth, Filippino Lippi had not risen to the dignity and the truthful representation of nature which distinguish his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, and which he acquired from the study of the works of his great predecessor, Masaccio. No record has hitherto been discovered which enables us to fix with certainty the date of his employment in the Church of the Carmine. His frescoes there show the results of long and careful study, and of mature experience. When we compare them with the "Vision of S. Bernard" and other pictures by him of the same period, it is scarcely possible not to feel convinced that some years must have elapsed between their execution, and that the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel were not, as

Vasari has asserted, amongst his earliest works. It was probably, therefore, after he had had much practice as a painter, and towards the end of the century, that they were undertaken. We know, from existing records, that he was in Rome from the year 1489 to about 1493, in the service of Cardinal Olivero Caraffa, for whom he painted a series of frescoes in a chapel in the Church of the Minerva. It seems to me that these works show an inferiority of style and execution to those in the Brancacci Chapel, which tends to prove that they are of an earlier date.*

The frescoes in the Caraffa Chapel represent incidents from the legend of S. Thomas Aquinas. They are distinguished by a rich fancy, boldness of execution, variety in the expression, attitudes, and grouping of the figures; a life-like truth and individuality in the various heads, giving them the character of portraits; and a considerable knowledge of the laws of composition. The architectural backgrounds are rich in ornaments and arabesques, classic in design and spirit, and such as, according to Vasari, Filippino first introduced into painting, after he had made careful studies and drawings from the ancient monuments by which he found himself surrounded in Rome. In the most important of these frescoes, S. Thomas

* Signor Cavalcaselle, however, is of a different opinion (Crowe and Cavalcaselle, History of Painting in Italy, vol. ii., p. 441); and it must be admitted that there is strong evidence to favour his view, if Vasari is right in placing amongst the portraits introduced into one of the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel those of Messer Soderini, who died in 1485, and of the poet Pulci, who died in 1486; but little dependence can be placed upon this writer's statements.

Aquinas is represented seated on a richly-ornamented architectural throne, between four allegorical female figures, amongst which are Theology and Philosophy. He is defending the church from the attacks of her enemies, and he tramples under foot a prostrate unbeliever. Before him stand two groups of discomfited heretics, including Arius, Sabellius, Averroes, and other promoters of heresy. On the ground, in the midst of them, lie their books, scattered and torn. Distant views of mountains and buildings are seen in the background, and the subject is enclosed by two pilasters ornamented with elegant arabesques.* Vasari possessed Filippino's original design for this fresco, upon which he bestows much praise. Amongst the other frescoes in the chapel, are those of "S. Thomas kneeling before the Crucifix," when, according to the legend, the figure of Christ spake, and addressed to him the words, "Bene scripsisti de me, Toma," and the "Annunciation" and "Ascension of the Virgin."†

The proportions of the figures in these works are not always correct, the heads being too large; and the drawing, in general, is somewhat weak and constrained—defects which are not apparent in Filippino's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. The colour is also rather monotonous in tone and wants vigour, but this may be the result of repainting and of injudicious restoration, which have impaired its original

* A careful copy of this fresco, and facsimiles of some of the finest heads, have been made for the Arundel Society by Signor Mariannecci.

† Several frescoes which existed in Vasari's time were destroyed when a monument was erected in the chapel to Pope Paul IV.

brightness and transparency. The heads are full of character and individuality, and are amongst the best examples of the painter's style.

One of the most charming and characteristic paintings executed by Filippino after his return from Rome, was a Madonna, with Saints and Angels, in a "tabernacolo" or small way-side oratory, in the picturesque town of Prato. Time and neglect have dealt hardly with this fresco, but still in the perishing outlines and in the tender fading colours may be traced one of the most graceful and beautiful creations of the painter.

He married, in 1497, one Margherita, whose family name has not been preserved. He had by her one son, who inherited his collection of sketches, drawings, and studies from the antique, some of which appear to have passed into the collection of Vasari.

In the year 1500 Filippino was employed at Florence on his last considerable work, the decoration in fresco of the Chapel of the Strozzi family in the Church of S. Maria Novella. He had received the commission for it some years before. The frescoes which he executed and which cover the walls and vaulted ceiling, represent incidents from the legends of S. Drusiana, S. John, and S. Philip. In composition, in execution, and in general interest they are inferior to those which he painted in the Caraffa Chapel. They are overloaded with architectural details and with Roman ornaments and

emblems, which are not wanting in fancy and elegance, but are out of place and mar the general effect. The figures are frequently characterised by weak and defective drawing and incorrect proportions, and the colour is deficient in richness and harmony—this, however, may be in part owing to recent repainting and restoration.

The frescoes in the Strozzi Chapel appear to me to mark a decline of the powers of the artist, whilst those in the Caraffa Chapel show progress, and a bold and vigorous hand. I am, therefore, inclined to think that the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel—undoubtedly the best of his works—were painted in the interval between the execution of these two undertakings.

Filippino Lippi died of fever and quinsy in 1505, at the age of forty-five years, whilst painting a picture for the high-altar of the Church of the Annunziata. He was buried in the Church of S. Michele Bisdomini, at Florence. During his life-time he had been held in high esteem by his fellow-citizens, and like many great artists of his time, seems to have exercised a good deal of influence in his native city. We find by the records of the period that he was frequently called upon by the magistrates and chiefs of the republic to act upon commissions in matters of art, and to aid them with his opinion and advice. Vasari says that he was of a very courteous and amiable disposition, and that his death was lamented by all who knew him, and especially by the youth of Florence, whom he was always ready to help in their public festivals, masks, and other amusements, with his fruitful fancy and merry inventions

—in which he had no equal. So much was he beloved that the shops were closed in the streets through which his funeral passed, a mark of honour and respect only shown on the rarest occasions to illustrious citizens.

In addition to the frescoes which I have described, Filippino painted many altar-pieces and easel pictures, all on panel, some of which are still to be found in the churches of Florence and of the neighbourhood, or are preserved in public galleries and private collections. They are generally pleasing in colour and in composition. His female figures, especially his representations of the Virgin, are distinguished by much grace and religious sentiment; and there is a vigorous portrait-like character in his male heads which adds interest to his pictures. The most remarkable of his larger works are the altar-piece in the Chapel of the Nerli family in the Church of S. Spirito, at Florence, and the Adoration of the Magi, in the Gallery of the Uffizi; both of them excellent examples of his best qualities—of his playful fancy, of his truthful rendering of nature, of the life-like individuality of his figures, and of his rich and harmonious colouring. The picture upon which he was engaged at the time of his death, representing Christ taken down from the cross, was finished by Pietro Perugino, and is now in the gallery of the Academy at Florence. The large altar-piece by him, painted for the Rucellai family, and now in the National Gallery, of the Virgin and Child, with S. Jerome and S. Domenick, and the "predella," with half-length figures of the Magdalen, S. Francis, and the dead Christ supported by Joseph of Arimathea, is a work of his later period. It is less pleasing

in composition, and less graceful in the forms, than some of his earlier productions, and the colour has lost much of its richness, and has become dark and heavy through age: but the picture is marked by his vigorous treatment, and the individuality of his heads. The national collection contains two other pictures attributed to him—the Adoration of the Magi, apparently part of a "cassone" or chest, and a small picture representing S. Francis in glory, surrounded by graceful and fanciful figures of angels playing on various instruments of music. Although both are pleasing works, they are not to be classed amongst the best specimens of Filippino's skill.

Having thus given a sketch of the lives of the three painters who, according to Vasari and other authorities, were employed upon the walls of the Brancacci Chapel, I will proceed to describe the works which have been attributed to each of them.

Of the paintings which once adorned the vault and the lunettes, no traces, as I have already mentioned, can now be seen. It is doubtful whether they have been entirely destroyed, or whether—like many other works of the great painters of the early periods of Italian art—they are still concealed beneath modern decoration and whitewash. They were executed, according to Vasari, who gives a description of them, by Masolino. Those in the vault represented the four Evangelists—those in the lunettes, Christ taking S. Peter and S. Andrew from their nets, S. Peter denying Christ, and the shipwreck of the Apostles. The frescoes which now remain do

not follow any particular arrangement. With the exception of two, the whole series refers to incidents in the life of S. Peter. The two exceptions are Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the Expulsion from Paradise, which occupy the upper parts of the two pilasters at the entrance to the Chapel (Nos. 1 and 2).* The first has been generally attributed to Masolino, and the other to Masaccio. Signor Cavalcaselle assigns both to the last-named painter. There is no doubt that both are marked by his peculiar manner of seeking to give the effect of roundness and relief by applying the high lights to the edges of his forms, and by that warm reddish hue which pervades his flesh tints. In both the nude shows a careful study of nature, and perhaps of classic examples. The proportions are, on the whole, correct, as are the general indications of the anatomical details. The action of the figures is natural, and proper relief is given to them by just distribution of light and shade; nor are they deficient in a certain grace. In all these respects these frescoes display a very great advance upon any previous and contemporary works—more especially in the successful attempt to represent the human form, from a careful study of nature herself. In this alone they mark an epoch in the history of painting.

In the first fresco Adam and Eve are represented standing under the tree of knowledge, round which is coiled the serpent, with the head of a woman, as is usual in pictures of the time.

* These two frescoes were included in the publications of the Arundel Society for 1861.

Eve holds in her hand the fatal apple, and turns toward Adam with a calm expression of entreaty, whilst he extends one hand towards her, as if in the act of remonstrating. In the Expulsion, Adam hides his face with both hands as if in a paroxysm of grief, and Eve looks towards heaven with an expression of anguish and despair. An angel floating in the air holds a drawn sword in one hand, and with the other points to the way out of Paradise. Raphael appears to have felt so much admiration for this group that he introduced it into the series of scripture subjects, which he executed in the Loggie of the Vatican, making some slight alterations in it to improve the composition. He reversed the position of the arms of Eve, and connected the angel more closely with the two central figures, although perhaps not thereby adding to the dignity of the composition, by placing one of its hands upon the shoulder of Adam, as if it were forcibly expelling him from Paradise. The figure of Adam he has left as Masaccio conceived it, probably thinking that it could not be improved.

The next fresco, following the most convenient arrangement according to subjects, is the upper one to the right on entering the chapel (No. 3). It is divided, according to the habit of painters of that time, into two distinct parts, representing two different incidents, in both of which the same person plays the principal part. To the right is Peter raising Tabitha,* to the left the Apostle healing the cripple at the gate of the Temple.

* Acts, chap. ix.

Vasari incorrectly describes this fresco as "S. Peter releasing his daughter Petronilla from her infirmity." This legend has rarely, if ever, been painted by the early Italian masters, and it is probable that in designing a series of frescoes illustrating the life of S. Peter, the painter would rather have chosen an incident described in scripture than an apocryphal and little-known story. S. Petronilla, according to the Roman legend, was a daughter of the Apostle, who accompanied him to Rome, where she became paralysed in her limbs, and was unable to move from her bed. The disciples of S. Peter having made it a reproach to him, that whilst he healed others he permitted his daughter to remain stricken with infirmity, he caused her to rise and to serve them at table, after which she returned to her couch helpless as she was before. After many years of suffering and of prayer she was healed. A noble Roman, of the name of Valerius Flaccus, then became enamoured of her and sought her for his wife. Fearing to refuse him she desired him to return in three days, when she would go with him to his home. In the meanwhile she prayed fervently to be delivered from this sore trial. Before Flaccus came back she died. She was borne to the grave, crowned with roses, by her lover and the company of young nobles who had accompanied him to claim her as his bride.*

This fresco is the only one in the Brancacci Chapel, the authorship of which is open to any doubt. Vasari attributes it

* This legend is related by Mrs. Jameson, in her Sacred and Legendary Art, vol. i., p. 185, from the Legendario.

to Masolino, and his opinion had been accepted by all writers on art who had investigated the subject. But recently it has been rejected, as I have already stated, by Signor Cavalcaselle, who assigns it to Masaccio.

Tabitha, clothed in white, is raising herself upon her bed. Kneeling by her side are two women, dressed as nuns, "the widows" of the story. Near her are three men, one of whom wears an eastern dress and a turban. They show their astonishment at the miracle by rather violent action of the hands, and by somewhat exaggerated expression of countenance. The Apostle, with a companion, stands at the entrance to the kind of portico beneath which the bed of Tabitha has been placed. He stretches out his right hand, extending two fingers, as in the act of blessing and calling the dead woman to life.*

It will be perceived that the painter has not closely followed the scripture narrative. The miracle is said to have taken place in "an upper chamber," and after Peter had put out those who stood by him weeping. The Apostle then knelt down, and when, at his command, Tabitha opened her eyes, and sat up, he gave her his right hand and lifted her up.† The painter has represented the miracle as taking place in an open portico, in the street of a city, and in the presence of various spectators.

* A copy of this fresco was included in the publications of the Arundel Society for 1862.

† Acts, chap. ix.

The group which I have described, is so inferior in its composition, and in dignity and refinement, to the other frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, attributed, upon the best evidence, to Masaccio, that it is difficult to convince oneself that they are by the same hand.* At the same time there are many points of resemblance between them, especially in the distribution of light and shade, and in the general tone of colour, which would tend to show that they are the works of two men who had studied in the same school, or who stood in the relation to each other of master and scholar. The same remark will apply to the remaining half of the fresco, which is not connected with the part just described in the general composition, and represents a different subject. S. Peter, accompanied by S. John, is seen healing a cripple. The figure of S. Peter is dignified, but inferior in conception to that of the Apostle in the other frescoes in the chapel. His action, and that of the deformed man who appeals to him, is natural. Two youths standing near are dressed in fantastic costumes, after the manner of Masolino. They are not necessary to the composition, which wants unity and spirit. The background, which represents a street, probably in old Florence, resembles one in a fresco by Masolino at Castiglione d' Olona.

Following the upper line of frescoes we next come to "S. Peter Baptising"† (No. 4), which Vasari attributes, and no

* The inferiority in the treatment of this fresco may be seen by comparing the facsimile of the head of S. Peter, published by the Arundel Society, with the facsimiles of other heads by Masaccio, also included in the Society's publications.

† Published by the Arundel Society in their issue for 1861.

doubt rightly, to Masaccio. It is impossible not to be struck with the superiority of this great work over the one I have just described—in the grandeur and dignity of the figures, in the lofty character of the heads, in the natural grace of the action of the persons represented, in the broad and skilful arrangement of the draperies, and in the composition. If they were both painted by Masaccio, his progress during the short interval which must have elapsed between the time of their execution is without example.

S. Peter is represented standing on the bank of a small stream. With his left hand he gathers together his ample garments, whilst with his right he pours water from a small vessel upon the head of a youth, who kneels in the stream, and joins his hands together in prayer with a devout and earnest expression. The countenance of the Apostle is grave, and his action natural and dignified. Around this group are several men preparing to receive the rite of baptism. One, already undressed, stands shivering in the cold. Vasari especially praises the natural action of this figure, which, he declares, had attracted the admiration of the greatest painters, and which was altogether a new feature in art. Behind S. Peter are two men in turbans. In the background are sketched, with remarkable freedom of touch, some distant hills.

The nude in this fine composition is more carefully studied and understood, and more truthfully and broadly rendered than, in the figures of Adam and Eve already described. The types which the painter has adopted for the Apostle and his disciples,

differ from those in the "Raising of Tabitha," and reappear in the other frescoes by Masaccio. Had this work alone been preserved, it would have been sufficient to justify the reputation of its author as the greatest and most original painter of the century in which he lived, so rich in great painters, and as the founder of what Vasari has termed "modern art"—that is to say, of its last and most perfect phase, the union of the highest idealisation of form, action, and expression, with the most truthful representation of nature, and the most intimate knowledge of the laws of composition and of colour, and the most consummate technical skill.

The next fresco in order of arrangement represents S. Peter Preaching* (No. 5). It is assigned by Vasari and by some modern critics to Masolino, but there can be little doubt that it is by Masaccio, as it is almost identical in character with the one last described. The Apostle stands with his right hand raised, in the act of addressing the multitude. Behind him are his two companions in turbans, as in the previous fresco. In front of him is a group of men and women, some seated and others standing. They are listening with deep attention to the words of the Apostle, and the effect produced upon each of them is shown by an appropriate expression of countenance. Sir Joshua Reynolds suggests that Raphael borrowed one of the figures in his cartoon of S. Paul Preaching at Athens—that of the listening bystander to the right—from the representation, in this fresco, of the old

* Arundel Society's Publications for 1861.

man seated on the ground, with "his head sunk in his breast and with his eyes shut, appearing deeply wrapt up in thought."*

Masaccio has shown in this fresco that remarkable power of telling a story in a simple and natural way, which distinguishes his earliest works in the Church of S. Clemente at Rome.

The frescoes that apparently succeed in order of execution and arrangement are those on the lower part of the same wall. They continue the history of the miracles and acts of S. Peter. In the one to the right (No. 6), the Apostle and S. John are represented distributing alms to the poor, and in the one to the left (No. 7), they are seen walking by the sick, who are cured by the shadows of the Apostles passing over them. These two frescoes are rightly assigned by Vasari to Masaccio. The composition in both is admirable for its simplicity. In the fresco of the distribution of alms, S. Peter and his brother disciple are seen in the midst of the sick, the poor, and the deformed. The countenance of the elder Apostle is singularly grand and dignified.† His hair is arranged in three bands, as typical of the triple crown of the papacy. In one hand he holds a money-box, and with the other gives a coin to a poor woman, who stands before him with a child in her arms. A cripple on crutches drags himself towards the two Apostles, and a young man lies stretched on the ground at their feet.

* Twelfth Discourse.

† A facsimile of the head of S. Peter was published by the Arundel Society in its issue for 1863.

Several men and women complete the picture, the background of which is formed by houses and distant hills.

In the other fresco S. Peter, accompanied by S. John, is walking with stately and solemn step through the streets of a city, apparently unmindful that three miserable cripples, deformed and maimed — horrible objects, such as are constantly met with on the steps of a Roman church — are seeking his shadow in order that they may be healed. The figure in a red cap, to the right of S. Peter, is believed to be the portrait of Masolino.* The draperies in this fresco are treated with a breadth and dignity worthy of the highest class of sculpture, and are far in advance of the works of any contemporary painter.

The upper fresco on the wall to the left (No. 8), is in some respects the most important and interesting of the whole series.† It is unquestionably by Masaccio, and is a noble monument of his genius. The subject is taken from Matthew, ch. xvii., v. 27, where Christ says to Peter, "Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take and give unto them (that receive tribute money) for me and thee." Three distinct incidents are represented in the fresco: Christ addressing those words to S. Peter, and the Apostle taking the money from the mouth

* Vasari used it to illustrate his biography of the painter.

† Included in the publications of the Arundel Society for 1861.

of the fish, and afterwards paying it to the receiver of the tribute. The three incidents are, however, so combined as to form part of one grand composition, unlike the scattered arrangement of the figures in the "Raising of Tabitha."

The whole interest is concentrated in the centre group, in which Christ is represented in the midst of his apostles and disciples. Before him stands the officer demanding payment of the tribute. The Saviour points towards the sea, and directs Peter to seek the money in the mouth of the fish. In the distance, to the spectator's left, the Apostle is seen bending down at the water's edge and obeying the commands of his Master. To the right, he is placing the tribute money in the extended hand of the officer. In the background is a landscape, with distant hills.

In this fine composition, Masaccio has shown a knowledge of the laws and practice of painting far in advance of his contemporaries, and such as to excite our wonder, when we consider the time in which he lived, and the state of the art at that period. The story is told in his usual simple and natural way. There is not a figure too much. He has not introduced any unnecessary details for mere effect. In the principal group the painter has only given action to the three persons who take a direct part in the incident—to Christ, S. Peter, and the officer. The collector of the tribute stands in the foreground, with his back to the spectator. There is more energy in his attitude and in his expression, than in those of the other two figures. With one hand

extended, he appears to insist upon the payment of his due, pointing with the other towards a building, which may be the office of customs, whilst he looks towards Christ as if appealing to His sense of justice and to His respect for the law. Our Lord points towards the sea, in the act of addressing Peter and telling him where to seek the money. The Apostle, with a natural gesture, denoting doubt and surprise, repeats the action of his Master, as if enquiring whether he had heard rightly. The other disciples* stand round as spectators. The interest which they take in what is passing is expressed in their countenances, but no action interferes with that of the principal persons of the group. The types of the heads chosen by the painter are noble and have a strong individuality. In the subordinate incident of the payment of the tribute money, which, although skilfully introduced, ought not to have formed part of the composition, the action of S. Peter is dignified and appropriate. The hills and trees forming the background are drawn with much boldness and freedom, and blend harmoniously with the figures. They show that Masaccio had rejected the conventional mode of representing a landscape, such as was practised by contemporary painters and even by some who lived long after him.

The figure and countenance of Christ are youthful, yet grave and majestic; His action full of dignity. The individuality of S. Peter is maintained through the whole series of

* Four figures to the left of Christ are without the glories round their heads, which mark the others as apostles. They may, therefore, represent mere spectators; but they make up the number twelve.

frescoes which Masaccio painted. He is represented as a man advanced in years, with a somewhat solemn expression of countenance, and his action is always in agreement with the character which the painter evidently wished to portray.

The figure to the spectator's right, with a broad forehead, denoting much strength of character, wearing an ample red cloak, which is thrown over his shoulder, is traditionally believed to be the portrait of Masaccio himself, painted, according to Vasari, by the aid of a mirror.*

The draperies in this fresco are remarkable for their broad and classic treatment, so different from the hard and angular conventional style of the fourteenth century. They are disposed in massive folds, and so arranged as to produce flowing and graceful lines, and at the same time to indicate the forms beneath. The general tone of the colour has been much lowered by time, and by the dirt and dust which cover the surface of the intonaco, and its original brightness and transparency have disappeared. Fortunately, however, the fresco has escaped the fate of so many great works in Italy, and has not been destroyed by repainting and injudicious restoration. In the reproduction published by the Arundel Society the colours are restored as nearly as possible to their original state. Masaccio's colouring is warm and ruddy (perhaps somewhat too red and hot in the high lights), and rich and dark in the shadows.

* The head, together with that of the last Apostle to the spectator's left, has been published by the Arundel Society in facsimile in their issue for 1861.

His peculiar method of giving the effect of relief and roundness by placing the high lights on the edge of his forms, is well illustrated in this fresco. He does not appear to have been followed in it by any other painter.

When we remember that this work was executed at the commencement of the fifteenth century, when the art of painting was still almost in its infancy, and when it was trammelled by the conventional forms and traditions upon which the followers and imitators of Giotto had founded their schools in different parts of Italy; when the laws of light and shade and of perspective were almost unknown; and when Masolino alone appears to have made any attempt to study from nature herself, and to portray her truthfully, the genius of Masaccio cannot but command our admiration. It is true that his master, Masolino, had pointed out the way to him, and had himself made considerable progress in a right direction. But the distance between them is so great that they almost seem to belong to a different age. Masaccio appears to have been the first painter to understand thoroughly the laws of composition, and of the distribution of light and shade, and the true principles of foreshortening. There remained indeed little for those who came after him to do, except to develop and to perfect what he had began. In the technical part of his art he was still deficient, and he wanted that intimate knowledge of the human frame and that power of portraying it, which painters who came after him could acquire by the study and imitation of models and examples which in Masaccio's time did not exist. But in the perception of the true aim and object of

painting; in the power of conveying his meaning in the simplest and yet most effective manner; in a lofty conception of character; and in that highest quality of the painter and the poet, which consists in the selection of the most elevated types, and which substitutes the noblest and yet most truthful rendering of nature for that which is vulgar, conventional, and false. Masaccio must be ranked amongst the greatest painters of any age or country. The fresco of the "Tribute-money" is not unworthy to be ranked with those of Raphael in the Vatican. This illustrious painter, who had diligently studied and frequently imitated the works of Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel, appears to have had this fresco in his mind when he designed the noble cartoon of "Christ delivering the keys to Peter." He adopted a somewhat similar composition, and the action he has given to Christ recalls that of the Saviour in the "Tribute-money." It may even be doubted whether, by introducing more energy into the attitude and expression of the Apostle, he has not shown a less dignified conception of his character than Masaccio.

Masaccio had attained the highest eminence in his art when he commenced the fresco which he did not live to finish. It is on the same side of the chapel as the one just described, and below it (No. 9). The subject, called by Vasari "The Raising of the King's Son," is taken from an apocryphal incident in the life of S. Peter, related in the Golden Legend. Theophilus, king of Antioch, having cast the Apostle into prison for preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of that city, S. Paul interceded in his behalf and represented to the king that Peter could cure the infirm and raise the dead. Theophilus

asked that his son, who had been dead for fourteen years, should be restored to life as the condition for the release of the Apostle. S. Peter having been brought out of his prison prayed over the body of the boy, who immediately lived again. Theophilus and his subjects were converted to Christianity by this miracle, and, building a church, they raised in the middle of it a splendid throne for the Apostle.*

This incident is represented in the fresco as taking place in the courtyard of a spacious building. To the left Theopnilus is seen enthroned, with his sceptre in his hand. Beneath him are seated his counsellors, one of whom turns towards him as if expressing astonishment at the miracle. Around the throne are various bystanders. S. Peter performs the miracle before the king, and in the midst of a crowd of spectators; S. Paul kneels by his side, and with joined hands offers up prayers for its success. The king's son, a naked boy on one knee upon a cloth spread upon the ground, raises his two hands in an attitude of fear and astonishment. Lying around him are human skulls and bones. In the right-hand corner of the fresco, a second incident is represented. S. Peter is seen seated on a throne, with his face turned towards heaven and his hands joined in prayer. Before him kneel three men, and around him are various figures, including three in Carmelite dress, probably portraits of friars

* According to some writers the subject of this fresco is the restoring to life of Eutichus, who had fallen from a window. (Acts, ch. xx.) According to others, S. Paul confounding Simon the Sorcerer by the miracle of restoring a dead youth to life.

in the convent to which the Church containing the Brancacci Chapel belonged.

Vasari tells us that Masaccio died whilst employed upon this fresco, and that many years afterwards it was finished by Filippino Lippi. This statement is fully borne out by the fresco itself. If we compare it with those executed entirely by Masaccio, we recognise in it two distinct styles and the work of two different artists. We can easily detect the parts which were painted by him. His peculiar reddish tone of colouring, and his mode of applying the high lights to the edges of his forms, contrast strongly with the more sober and rather grayish tints, and slighter modelling of Filippino Lippi. In the copy of the fresco published by the Arundel Society* the difference between the styles of the two painters is very distinctly marked, and we can readily recognise those parts which are by Masaccio. They are, to the left, the king, the two counsellors seated beneath him, and the centre group, as far as the figure in green immediately behind the king's son; and to the right, S. Peter enthroned, the three kneeling figures, and the groups on both sides of the Apostle. The remainder of the fresco, that is to say, the four figures behind the king, and nine forming the centre of the picture, together with the king's son, is by Filippino Lippi.†

* Arundel Society's Publications for 1863.

† Signor Cavalcaselle further attributes half the arm and the foot of S. Peter, and all but the head of the kneeling S. Paul to Filippino Lippi. (History of Italian Painting, vol. i., p. 537.)

It is impossible to determine how far Filippino may have modified Masaccio's original design, or whether he merely finished that which had already been sketched upon the wall, or in a working cartoon, by his predecessor. But the parts painted by him are influenced by a different spirit from that which guided Masaccio. Nearly three quarters of a century had elapsed since that great painter had died. During this interval, Ghirlandaio and other illustrious fresco painters of the Florentine school, had further developed the "modern style" which Masaccio had founded. They had been able to improve the technical processes, and had consequently advanced another step in the art. They had sought to give a more naturalistic character to their works, by introducing the portraits of eminent citizens of their time into their compositions, rather as adding an historical interest to their frescoes and giving to them a reality which mere ideal heads could not produce, than as forming a necessary part of the incident represented. But if that was their object they scarcely attained it. Interesting as these portraits undoubtedly are, the persons introduced appear to be present rather as unconcerned spectators of what is passing, than as taking any share in it; and this gives an unreal and artificial aspect to the composition. Masaccio, as we have seen, had, according to a tradition, introduced his own portrait and that of Masolino into his frescoes, but if such be really the case, they both appear as actors in the incident represented.*

* Giotto appears to have been the first painter, as far as we know, who introduced portraits of his contemporaries into his frescoes. That in the

In the fresco of the "Raising of the King's Son," Filippino Lippi has imitated Ghirlandaio. He has introduced a number of persons for the purpose of portraying many of his most distinguished friends and fellow citizens, and not because they were necessary to the story; but he has placed them in a natural way, and although the composition is somewhat crowded, the nature of the subject may have required this mode of treatment. The portraits are most vigorously and truthfully painted. Vasari has mentioned several of them.* The King's son was the painter Granacci, then a boy. The figure in the left-hand corner of the fresco is believed to represent Tommaso Soderini; by his side stands Luigi Pulci, the poet. Piero Guicciardini and Piero del Pugliese, two other eminent Florentines introduced into the composition, have not been satisfactorily identified. The portrait of Sandro Botticelli, which Vasari has inadvertently placed in this fresco, is to be found in the one on the opposite side, representing the Martyrdom of S. Peter.

Filippino Lippi did not possess the genius of Masaccio; he was inferior to that great painter in vigour and inventive power, and was more mannered, but he had much of his noble and elevated conception of character. His colouring is sometimes monotonous in his frescoes, and lacks that richness and brilliancy which distinguish his pictures on panel. This

Bargello contained, besides the portrait of Dante, those of some of the principal citizens of Florence, but there was a reason for introducing them.

* Three of them have been copied in facsimile for the Arundel Society by Signor Mariannecci.

may perhaps be traced to the influence of Fra Filippo or Sandro Botticelli. He is superior to Masaccio in certain technical qualities, in a knowledge of the true laws of perspective and of the distribution of light and shade, which give roundness and relief to the forms, and place the various objects represented in their relative positions. His draperies are broadly painted, and well disposed in graceful folds. On the whole, no painter of the time was more worthy to finish the work which Masaccio had begun, and to complete the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, than Filippino Lippi. It must not be forgotten that these celebrated paintings owe much of their renown to the subjects executed by him, and that a great part of the praise bestowed by Sir Joshua Reynolds on Masaccio, is really due to Lippi, whose works the English critic erroneously attributed to the former painter. The fresco of the "Raising of the King's Son," the combined work of these two great masters, is one of the noblest monuments of painting of the fifteenth century.

The subjects which follow the fresco just described are on the lower part of the two pilasters at the entrance to the chapel. That to the left of the spectator (No. 10) represents S. Paul addressing S. Peter, who is looking through the window of his prison; that to the right (No. 11) the Angel releasing the Apostle. They are both by Filippino Lippi, and are very characteristic examples of his genius and of his peculiar manner. The majestic figure of S. Paul addressing his brother apostle has been introduced, with little change, by Raphael into his magnificent cartoon of

"S. Paul Preaching at Athens," and again in the cartoon of "The Punishment of Elymas the Sorcerer." It is probable that Filippino Lippi himself was indebted for the original conception of the figure to Masaccio's fresco of S. Peter Preaching, which he had before him when painting in the Brancacci Chapel. There is much which is alike in the attitude and the arrangement of the drapery in both figures.

The only change which Raphael has made in Filippino Lippi's figure, is to raise both the Apostle's arms and to show both his hands. He did this in order to give additional vehemence and energy to the action, as more appropriate to an orator addressing a large concourse of persons than the more lifting of one hand, which would be the natural gesture in speaking to a single person.*

ST PAUL ADDRESSING A PAGAN - FILIPPINO LIPPI

S. PAUL PREACHING. RAPHAEL.

difficult for even Raphael to improve upon this representation of the Apostle, which for its noble and dignified expression and action, for the broad and well disposed folds of the drapery, and for its rich yet sober colouring, may be ranked amongst the finest productions of the art.* In the fresco of the "Delivery of S. Peter from Prison," we are again reminded of Filippino's master, or more probably fellow pupil, Sandro Botticelli, by the dullish gray tone of the colouring, and by the graceful and somewhat effeminate expression and form of the angel who leads the Apostle by the hand, and by the youthful soldier, who sits at the prison gate deep in sleep, leaning upon his lance.

The last fresco of the series is also the undoubted work of Filippino Lippi (No. 12). It represents two distinct subjects, forming separate groups—the painter having followed in this respect the example set by his predecessors, and adopted a mode of composition which was rarely practised by painters of his time. The subject to the right of the spectator has been variously described by different writers. Vasari, in the first edition of his Lives of the Italian Painters, calls it "The dispute of Simon the Sorcerer with S. Peter before Nero," but it is now usually known as "S. Peter and S. Paul before the

composed dignity, that animated expression which was necessary to the more active employment he assigned them." As I have pointed out in the text, the difference lay in the fact that in Filippino Lippi's fresco the Apostle is represented as addressing a single individual, in Raphael's cartoon as addressing a multitude.

* A facsimile of the head of S. Paul has been published by the Arundel Society, in its issue for 1862.

Proconsul Felix." It is not, however, quite clear, what incident in the life of S. Peter the painter has intended to represent. The Roman judge appears to be stretching forth his hand as if he were in the act of ordering S. Peter to be led away to execution. Before him stand the two Apostles and a person who appears to be their accuser, and with whom S. Peter, by the action of his hands, would seem to be disputing or remonstrating. Two counsellors are seated near the throne of the Proconsul, and five spectators complete the group.

Raphael appears to have borrowed his figure of Sergius Paulus, in the cartoon of "Elymas the Sorcerer Struck Blind," from that of the Proconsul in this fresco.*

In the other half of the fresco is represented the martyrdom of S. Peter, who is crucified with his head downwards, according to the tradition. The executioners are about to raise the cross to which the Apostle has been nailed. Nine spectators stand around. The background of the entire

* Sir J. Reynolds in his Twelfth Discourse observes: "the figure of the Proconsul Sergius Paulus in Raphael's cartoon is taken from the Felix of Masaccio (Lippi), though one is a front figure and the other seen in profile; the action is likewise somewhat changed; but it is plain Raphael had that figure in his mind. There is a circumstance, indeed, which I mention by the bye, which marks it very particularly. Sergius Paulus wears a crown of laurel; this is hardly reconcilable to strict propriety and the costume, of which Raphael was in general a good observer; but he found it so in Masaccio (Lippi), and he did not bestow so much pains in disguise as to change it. It appears to me an excellent practice, thus to suppose the figures which you wish to adopt in the works of these great painters to be statues; and to give, as Raphael has here given, another view, taking care to preserve all the spirit and grace you find in the original."

fresco is formed by a building, through an open archway in which is seen a distant landscape.

In this fresco Filippino Lippi has introduced his own portrait and those of his celebrated contemporaries, the painters Antonio Pollaiolo and Sandro Botticelli. Filippino has represented himself as a young man, in a dark cap, looking towards the spectator, and standing behind the throne of the Proconsul. Pollaiolo is the first standing figure to the right of the Proconsul, dressed in a high red cap and reddish mantle. Sandro Botticelli, in a blue cap and long violet cloak, is the last figure to the right of the group representing the martyrdom of S. Peter.

This fresco, fine as it undoubtedly is, and not undeserving of the praise which it has received from Italian writers on art, is inferior in many respects to those of Masaccio. It lacks the unity and concentration of subject, and that quiet and earnest dignity, which characterise the compositions of that great painter. But the figures are for the most part nobly conceived; the drawing of the nude vigorous and correct; the action truthful and appropriate; the draperies broad and well arranged. The colour is less rich and ruddy than that of Masaccio, but perhaps more agreeable to the eye. It is laid on with a much lighter brush, and in this respect contrasts with the careful and somewhat heavy modelling of the earlier painter. Nevertheless, by a skilful disposition of light and shade, Filippino has given relief and roundness to his figures, which stand out boldly

from the surface. The heads have that portrait-like and individual character which distinguishes all the works of the painter.

Such are the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. Although, considering their age and the injury and neglect to which they have been exposed, they have been fairly preserved, yet the accidents to which such monuments are constantly and, perhaps, unavoidably liable, rendered it very desirable that accurate copies of them—copies which could convey some idea of the beauty and character of the original works—should be made.* Already, many years ago, a part of the Church of the Carmine, containing some of the most remarkable and important of the works of Giotto, was destroyed by fire.† The same fate might befall the Brancacci Chapel. The lamentable destruction, only a few months ago, of two of the grandest and most precious pictures of the Venetian School, the great altar-piece by Gian Bellini, and the "Death of S. Peter Martyr," by Titian, should be a warning to us. Now that the principal ecclesiastical edifices in Italy which contain works of art have been placed under the care of public bodies and the local authorities, it may be hoped that proper precautions

* Engravings and outlines from these frescoes have been published at various times. The most complete collection is that published by Lasinio, at Florence, about thirty years ago, but it gives a very inadequate idea of the originals.

† Only one or two fragments of Giotto's frescoes were saved—amongst them the fine heads of two Apostles, which were purchased at the sale of Mr. Samuel Rogers, and are now in the National Gallery.

will be taken to protect and preserve them, and to guard these national treasures from unnecessary risk and wanton injury, and especially from the damage to which they have been exposed through the barbarous ignorance and carelessness of those in whose custody they have hitherto been.* But the Arundel Society has done well, and has fulfilled one of the principal objects for which it was founded, in having copies executed and published of works which hold so high a place in the history of art, and have exercised so marked an influence upon the development of painting.

A. H. LAYARD.

* Some of the finest pictures and frescoes in Italy, including those of the Brancacci Chapel, have received irreparable injury from the nails which the priests have been in the habit of driving into them for the purpose of "decorating" the church with those vulgar tawdry hangings that mark a feast day. The Italian Government has recently directed the removal of some of the most important pictures from churches and suppressed convents to public museums.

THE END.

Giorgione's Madonna and Child

AT

CASTELFRANCO.

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